

MINUTES OF THE JOINT SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL AND SPECIAL BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING, 7:00 P.M., THURSDAY, MARCH 8, 2018, THORPE AUDITORIUM, CHESHIRE HIGH SCHOOL, 525 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE, CT

Present: Council members Paul Bowman, Jeff Falk, Patti Flynn-Harris, Sylvia Nichols, Rob Oris (Chairman), Tom Ruocco, Tim Slocum, Peter Talbot, David Veleber. Board of Education (BOE) members Kathryn Fabiani (Vice Chairman), Anne Harrigan, Adam Grippo, Anthony Perugini, Neeta Vatti. Staff: Superintendent Jeff Solan, Chief Operating Officer Vin Masciana, Director of Pupil Personnel Services Tracy Nolan-Hussey, Director of Human Services Michelle Piccerillo, Police Chief Neil Dryfe, Deputy Fire Chief Donn Youngquist, Fire Marshal John Andrews, Town Manager Michael A. Milone, Assistant Town Manager Arnett Talbot.

Absent: Cathy Hellreich, BOE Chairman; Marléna Soble, BOE member.

Council Chairman Rob Oris called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. Roll was called and a quorum was determined for both the Town Council and the Board of Education.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Chairman Oris welcomed the attendees to this Public Information Session on School Security. He introduced the importance of the subject matter, stating that while we are doing a great job, we could always do better. He identified this as a community issue, and pledged to continue to work with the community and all stakeholders to keep our children safe.

Vice Chair Fabiani welcomed everyone, stating that we all agree this is a Town wide safety issue, and the safety of our children is of the utmost importance to our community.

Mr. Solan introduced the panelists, and presented information on what has been done and what is planned for school security (presentation attached).

Mr. Masciana discussed changes and improvements in the physical facilities and communication. Chief Dryfe discussed the School Resource Officer. Ms. Nolan-Hussey discussed school programs to address mental health and development of students. Ms. Piccerillo discussed the various programs offered by the Human Services Department in close cooperation with the schools to provide positive development and address mental health issues through education, intervention, and counseling.

Public comments:

Rob Brucato, 1146 Wolf Hill - expressed concerns about children getting to school it is open and waiting outside, school buses lined up waiting with children inside; transportation for after school programs, and wanted parents to know more about drills.

Pam (Parastoo) Ghazi, 7 Regent Court - suggested positive reinforcement and recognition for perseverance, and starting Youth Advocacy at a younger age, and wanted to know what happens to student when they get expelled.

Nicole Breton, CHS staff - expressed concern about the number of visitors and the safety of the students in the high school cafeteria and commons area.

Bob Osborne, 24 Flagler Avenue - works with a company that provides an IRAP platform that coordinates information for first responders and offered his assistance.

Lisa Dempsey, 5 Amherst Drive - suggested a Resource Officer at all schools, and a barrier between roads and school playgrounds.

Mr. Oris stated that additional Resource Officers will be part of the Council budget discussions.

Elizabeth Sullivan, 25 Sherwood Lane - asked to analyze to make sure what is being done is effective and appropriate, and what can the parents do to help.

Tinaz Mody, 28 Applewood Drive (Sandy Hook mom) - said she felt safe in Cheshire. Was concerned about the disconnect with parents and mental health issues of their children. Suggested that parents be educated on the importance of lock-down drills.

Bruce Linder, 652 Ashley Court - concerned about easy access to schools without ID, and stated that someone in the schools needs to own and manage the risk management function; he feels the parts aren't connected.

Terry Terzakis, 226 Mixville Road - agreed that it was too easy to gain access to the schools.

Wayne Bullock, 304 Beacon Hill - asked what the plans were for the children who fall through the cracks.

Mary House, 110 Charter Oak Dr. - concerned that it was too easy to get in to Doolittle; needs to be a desk by the door with a person. Suggested School Resource Officer in all the schools, every day, or perhaps a National Guardsman.

Mr. Solan and Mr. Masciana briefly explained the plans for the visitor management system and the difficulty in retrofitted 1950s buildings to address current security needs.

Vlad Katsovich, 230 Hitchkiss Ridge - suggested a permanent police officer at every school, perhaps even National Guardsmen, and that the schools need to hire professionals to test their systems to ensure they are working. He also

suggested metal detectors, and expressed concern about children working in hallways during the school day.

Mr. Oris said he supports a peer review and continuing dialogue.

Elizabeth DeCicco, 40 Bear Path Court - concern about what happens if someone gets into a school; she stressed the importance of drills for the kids, and the need to educate the parents about drills, and to do more for the teachers and staff to make sure they are trained and prepared.

Sally Anastos, 970 Knollwood Circle - asked if the same policies applied to after-school programs, and to be sure that students know what to do if they are outside their classroom.

Jeff Natale, 512 Cardinal Lane - concerned about access from rear doors, and also that no one checks who is picking students up from after school programs.

Mr. Solan thanked everyone for coming, reminded them to fill out the survey, briefly explained emotional management, and that the schools and the Town would continue to implement and improve, with further input from the community.

Ms. Fabiani thanked everyone for their support and stated she was looking forward to future meetings on this issue.

Mr. Oris thanked everyone for coming, and urged them to stay involved with the Council and the BOE on this issue, promising more dialogue opportunities.

MOTION to adjourn at 9:05 p.m. MOVED by Ms. Fabiani, seconded by Mr. Talbot, unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Arnett Talbot
Asst. Town Manager